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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 19 March 2010 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and President of the Security Council

I write to you today to once again convey our grave concerns regarding the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. As we have alerted in recent letters, ongoing illegal policies and practices being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, have continued to inflict harm and suffering on the Palestinian civilian population, to fuel tensions and instability in the area, and to cause the deterioration of the situation on the ground. In addition to Israel's aggressive and unlawful settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, the continuation of Israel's inhumane, unlawful blockade against the Gaza Strip has imposed deplorable living conditions on the civilian population and has had a traumatic impact, especially affecting children and women.

As we approach the one thousandth day of the Israeli blockade against Gaza, the socio-economic situation of the Palestinian civilian population remains dire, with the blockade adversely impacting the viability of all aspects of life. Economic, health, education and other societal indicators reveal the magnitude of the humanitarian suffering deliberately inflicted by the occupying Power on the Palestinian civilian population in what definitely constitutes collective punishment on the scale of a war crime. Poverty remains rampant in Gaza, with more than 70 per cent of the population now living below the poverty line and dependent on food aid for basic survival. Restrictions on imports and exports continue to undermine livelihoods, ensuring that unemployment rates also remain high. Health standards continue to decline as the healthcare system falls into disrepair and decay and continues to face supply shortages, and illness and disease, particularly malnutrition and anaemia, have become widespread.

Despite repeated demands by the international community for Israel to lift the blockade and abide by its legal obligations under international humanitarian law, the occupying Power continues to close Gaza's border crossings, obstructing the

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movement of persons and goods. The crossings are arbitrarily opened only for the entry of minimal requirements of food and medical aid. Israel continues to obstruct the movement of Palestinian civilians, among them sick persons in need of medical treatment not available in Gaza, students and families. The access of aid workers and governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental representatives to the Gaza Strip also continues to be restricted, and many continue to be subjected to harassment and intimidation by the occupying force at crossing points.

With its imposition of the blockade, Israel has also continued to obstruct the civilian population's access to necessary living supplies and materials, in flagrant breach of international humanitarian law. Basic commodities have become unattainable luxuries for thousands of Palestinian families. Restrictions on fuel imports continue to negatively affect the operation of the power plant in Gaza, resulting in ongoing electricity cuts, with power outages disrupting the functioning of schools, hospitals and home life.

Moreover, Israel has continued to prohibit the import of construction materials into Gaza, thus deliberately preventing the Palestinian civilian population from reconstructing the thousands of homes and other properties, including schools and health facilities, and infrastructure that it destroyed or caused damage to during its military aggression of last winter. The occupying Power has even prevented the United Nations from reconstructing destroyed and damaged facilities and continues to ignore the United Nations appeals to allow the reconstruction process to begin via the implementation of long overdue United Nations projects and initiatives. As a result, thousands of Palestinian families remain forcibly displaced and vital civilian infrastructure remains in total disrepair, with sanitation and sewage problems in particular increasing, further harming health and hygiene conditions, and severely undermining the ability of the population to recover from the physical and psychological impact of the military onslaught.

In particular, reports regarding the situation of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip starkly reveal the depth and extent of the severe trauma inflicted on these children as a result of the Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip last winter, the continuing Israeli blockade, and the extremely negative repercussions of both of these dehumanizing, illegal acts of aggression and collective punishment by the occupying Power. Various studies and reports indicate that severe anxiety, panic, nightmares, depression and fear are prevalent among the children and youth in Gaza. These children, who constitute over half of the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, continue to be traumatized and affected as a result of having witnessed and enduring, among other things, the following:

- The brutal killing and injury of family members and friends, including fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, relatives and classmates, by the Israeli occupying forces' missile strikes, shelling and gunfire. Many of the child survivors have themselves also suffered severe injuries and disabilities as a result of the military aggression that they continue to struggle with.
- The destruction of their homes as a result of explosions and fires caused by Israeli missile strikes and tank artillery bombardment and as a result of vandalism by the occupying forces, as well as the destruction of their schools, community facilities and neighbourhood infrastructure by airstrikes and shelling, including by white phosphorous projectiles.
- Homelessness and displacement: thousands upon thousands of children and their families were displaced from their homes as a result of the destruction caused during the aggression, with many still living in tents, often near the

rubble of their homes. The prohibition on reconstruction via the blockade has only prolonged their suffering in this regard.

- Rampant food insecurity as a result of the blockade, which has prevented families from being able to secure basic living needs for their children. This has resulted in alarming levels of acute malnutrition, anaemia and stunting among children.
- Lost education days due to the military aggression and fuel cuts that disrupt the functioning of schools and the lack of even basic educational supplies.

The above reflects only a brief picture of the deplorable humanitarian situation that continues to prevail in Gaza due to the illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power. Israel's intransigence and defiance of the calls to comply with its obligations under international law, including the provisions of relevant United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, continues to exacerbate the situation. Indeed, in addition to the humanitarian crisis, the continuing siege and the inability of the international community to act to bring it to an end is clearly increasing tensions and frustrations among the population, which can only lead to more negative repercussions and outcomes.

We are thus obliged to reiterate our call upon the international community to exert all efforts, including practical measures, to compel Israel to immediately cease all of the violations it is perpetrating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including its measures of collective punishment against the Palestinian people, foremost among them this dehumanizing, unlawful blockade. The international community cannot stand idly by while an entire people living under foreign occupation is denied their inalienable human rights, including the right to live in dignity, and while their society is being deliberately devastated and debilitated.

International law, including humanitarian and human rights law, must be respected by all members of the international community without exception. Israel cannot continue to be permitted to act with impunity without repercussions. Upholding the rule of law and our collective moral conscience demands the immediate redress of this unjust situation. This must, of course, also include genuine efforts towards ensuring accountability for all of the war crimes committed by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 361 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 16 March 2010 (A/ES-10/481-S/2010/142), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.